

File Clerks

(O*NET 55321)

Nature of the Work

The amount of information generated by organizations continues to grow rapidly. File clerks classify, store, retrieve, and update this information. In many small offices, they often have additional responsibilities, such as data entry, word processing, sorting mail, and operating copying or fax machines. They are employed across the Nation by organizations of all types.

File clerks, also called records, information, or record center clerks, examine incoming material and code it numerically, alphabetically, or by subject matter. They then store forms, letters, receipts, or reports in paper form or enter necessary information into other storage devices. Some clerks operate mechanized files that rotate to bring the needed records to them; others convert documents to films that are then stored on microforms, such as microfilm or microfiche. A growing number of file clerks use imaging systems that scan paper files or film and store the material on optical disks.

In order for records to be useful they must be up-to-date and accurate. File clerks ensure that new information is added to the files in a timely manner and may get rid of outdated file materials or transfer them to inactive storage. They also check files at regular intervals to make sure that all items are correctly sequenced and placed. Whenever records cannot be found, the file clerk attempts to locate the missing material. As an organization's needs for informa-

tion change, file clerks also implement changes to the filing system established by supervisory personnel.

When records are requested, file clerks locate them and give them to the borrower. The record may be a sheet of paper stored in a file cabinet or an image on microform. In the first example, the clerk manually retrieves the document and hands or forwards it to the borrower. In the latter example, the clerk retrieves the microform and displays it on a microform reader. If necessary, file clerks make copies of records and distribute them. In addition, they keep track of materials removed from the files to ensure that borrowed files are returned.

Increasingly, file clerks use computerized filing and retrieval systems. These systems use a variety of storage devices, such as a mainframe computer, magnetic tape, CD-ROM, or floppy disk. To retrieve a document in these systems, the clerk enters the document's identification code, obtains the location, and pulls the document. Accessing files in a computer database is much quicker than locating and physically retrieving paper files. Even when files are stored electronically, however, backup paper or electronic copies usually are also kept.

Employment

File clerks held about 272,000 jobs in 1998. Although file clerk jobs are found in nearly every sector of the economy, about 90 percent of these workers are employed in services, government, finance, insurance, and real estate. More than 1 out of every 4 is employed in temporary services firms, and about 1 out of 3 worked part time in 1998.

Job Outlook

Employment of file clerks is expected to grow about as fast as the average for all occupations through 2008. Projected job growth stems from rising demand for file clerks to record and retrieve information in organizations across the economy. This growth will be moderated, however, by productivity gains stemming from office automation and the consolidation of clerical jobs. Nonetheless, job opportunities for file clerks should be plentiful because a large number of workers will be needed to replace workers who leave the occupation each year. High turnover among file clerks reflects the lack of formal training requirements, limited advancement potential, and relatively low pay.

Jobseekers who have typing and other secretarial skills and are familiar with a wide range of office machines, especially personal computers, should have the best job opportunities. File clerks should find many opportunities for temporary or part-time work, especially during peak business periods.

Information on working conditions, training requirements, and earnings appears in the introduction to records processing occupations.



Many file clerks are employed by temporary help firms.

Human Resources Clerks, Except Payroll and Timekeeping

(O*NET 55314)

Nature of the Work

Human resources clerks maintain the personnel records of an organization's employees. These records include information such as name, address, job title, and earnings, benefits such as health and life insurance, and tax withholding. On a daily basis, these clerks record and answer questions about employee absences and supervisory reports on job performance. When an employee receives a promotion or switches health insurance plans, the human resources clerk updates the appropriate form. Human resources clerks may also prepare reports for managers elsewhere within the organization. For example, they might compile a list of employees eligible for an award.



Human resources clerks often screen applications for employment.

In smaller organizations, some human resources clerks perform a variety of other clerical duties. They answer telephone or letter inquiries from the public, send out announcements of job openings or job examinations, and issue application forms. When credit bureaus and finance companies request confirmation of a person's employment, the human resources clerk provides authorized information from the employee's personnel records. Payroll departments and insurance companies may also be contacted to verify changes to records.

Some human resources clerks are also involved in hiring. They screen job applicants to obtain information such as education and work experience; administer aptitude, personality, and interest tests; explain the organization's employment policies and refer qualified applicants to the employing official; and request references from present or past employers. Also, human resources clerks inform job applicants, by telephone or letter, of their acceptance or rejection for employment.

Other human resources clerks are known as assignment clerks. Their role is to notify a firm's existing employees of position vacancies and to identify and assign qualified applicants. They keep track of vacancies throughout the organization and complete and distribute vacancy advertisement forms. These clerks review applications in response to advertisements and verify information, using personnel records. After a selection is made, they notify all the applicants of their acceptance or rejection.

In some job settings, human resources clerks have specific job titles. Identification clerks are responsible for security matters at defense installations. They compile and record personal data about vendors, contractors, and civilian and military personnel and their dependents. Job duties include interviewing applicants; corresponding with law enforcement authorities; and preparing badges, passes, and identification cards.

Employment

Human resources clerks held about 142,000 jobs in 1998. Although these workers are found in most industries, about 1 in every 5 works for a government agency. Colleges and universities, hospitals, department stores, and banks also employ large numbers of human resources clerks.

Job Outlook

Replacement needs will account for most job openings for human resources clerks. Jobs will open up, as clerks advance within the personnel department, take jobs unrelated to personnel administration, or leave the labor force.

Little or no change is expected in employment of human resources clerks through the year 2008, largely due to the increased use of com-

puters. The growing use of computers in personnel or human resource departments means that a lot of data entry done by human resources clerks can be eliminated, as employees themselves enter the data and send it to the personnel office. This is most feasible in large organizations with multiple personnel offices. The increasing use of computers and other automated office equipment by managers and professionals in personnel offices also could mean less work for human resources clerks.

(See introductory statement on records processing occupations for information on working conditions, training requirements, and earnings.)

Library Assistants and Bookmobile Drivers

(O*NET 53902)

Nature of the Work

Library assistants and bookmobile drivers organize library resources and make them available to users. They assist librarians, and in some cases, library technicians.

Library assistants—sometimes referred to as library media assistants, library aides, or circulation assistants—register patrons so they can borrow materials from the library. They record the borrower's name and address from an application and then issue a library card. Most library assistants enter and update patrons' records using computer databases.

At the circulation desk, assistants lend and collect books, periodicals, video tapes, and other materials. When an item is borrowed, assistants stamp the due date on the material and record the patron's identification from his or her library card. They inspect returned materials for damage, check due dates, and compute fines for overdue material. They review records to compile a list of overdue materials and send out notices. They also answer patrons' questions and refer those they cannot answer to a librarian.

Throughout the library, assistants sort returned books, periodicals, and other items and return them to their designated shelves, files, or storage areas. They locate materials to be loaned, either for a patron or another library. Many card catalogues are computerized, so library assistants must be familiar with the computer system. If any materials have been damaged, these workers try to repair them. For example, they use tape or paste to repair torn pages or book covers and other specialized processes to repair more valuable materials.

Some library assistants specialize in helping patrons who have vision problems. Sometimes referred to as library, talking-books, or braille-and-talking-books clerks, they review the borrower's list of



Library assistants sort returned books, periodicals, and other items and shelve them in the proper place.